THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) Government of India is aware that at the initiative of His Majesty the King of Bhutan, the process for drafting a written Constitution for Bhutan is underway. A Drafting Committee headed by the Chief Justice of Bhutan has prepared a draft Constitution which was released to the public on March 26, 2005. The form of Government proposed in the Draft Constitution is a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy with a bicameral Parliamentary and political parties. The Draft constitution is currently being distributed within the country for discussion and debate.

(c) Restoration of democracy and allied political issues do not fall within the ambit of the SAARC agenda.

SAARC

3767. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he visited Pakistan and Afghanistan, recently;

(b) whether he discussed the future of SAARC, with the Pakistani Government

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether India is being accused of belittling the SAARC, how it looks at the present position of SAARC; and

(e) by when would the next SAARC conference be held?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Shri Natwar Singh, the Minister of External Affairs paid a bilateral visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan from February 15-17, 2005.

(b) During interaction with his Pakistani counterpart, they reviewed the status of our bilateral relations as well as regional cooperation under SAARC. They also agreed to work together for the early convening of the 13th SAARC Summit.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) and (e) India has reiterated her continuing and consistent comitment to the SAARC process and to increased regional economic cooperation among Member States. India is, however, of the view that it is only in an

environment free from political turmoil and violence that a Summit would yield the desired outcome. We have stressed our keenness to hold the 13th SAARC Summit in Dhaka at an early date. Pakistan, as Chair of SAARC, is required to initiate consultations with the host Government (Bangladesh) and other member countries for identifying fresh dates for the 13th SAARC Summit, which are mutually convenient to all SAARC members.

Atrocities against minorities in Bangladesh

†3768. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards a press communique issued by the 'Hindu-Buddhist-Christain Unity, Bangladesh' regarding atrocities being committed against the minorties particularly against Hindus living in Bangladesh.

(b) whether Government are aware of the recent attacks made on the houses and the places of worship of the minorities living there, and

(c) If so, the details thereof and the reasons for which Government have not registered their protest to the Government of Bangladesh in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNALAFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There are frequent reports, including in the Bangladeshi media, of attacks on properties and places of worship of the minority Hindu community. Attacks on the minority Buddhist, Ahmadiya and Shia communities have also been reported.

(c) The Government remains concerned at the reports of atrocities against miniorities in Bangladesh and have taken up the matter with the Government of Bangladesh.

Pak President's New Delhi visit

3769. SHRIMATI SUKHBUNS KAUR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what issues were discussed during the recent Pak President's visit to New Delhi;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.